United Nations

Daily Highlights

Department of Public Information • Central News Section • New York

Prepared by Central News

DH/1101
18 March 1992

WEDNESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

Note: Due to technical difficulties, it was not possible to issue Tuesday Highlights. However, yesterday's top stories are included in today's edition.

* * *

+ Secretary-General welcomes "positive results" of referendum on democratic reform in South Africa.

+ Secretary-General condemns bombing of Israeli Embassy in Buenos Aires yesterday, in which large number of innocent victims, including children, were killed or wounded.

+ Security Council expresses unanimous support for Secretary-General's decision to send technical team to Somalia to prepare for cease-fire monitoring; urges team to develop "high priority plan" for unimpeded delivery of humanitarian assistance to Somali civilians.

+ Prince Sihanouk and Secretary-General's Special Representative for Cambodia, Yasushi Akashi, welcome first contingents of United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia, at ceremony in Phnom Penh.

+ Administrative and Budgetary Committee recommends to General Assembly $250 million appropriation for financing of United Nations Protection Force in Yugoslavia.

+ Secretary-General extends sympathy to families of victims of earthquake in Erzincan, Turkey; says United Nations is ready to assist with relief operations.

+ World Health Organization reports "extremely serious form of malaria" in Cambodia threatening United Nations peace-keepers as well as Cambodian refugees preparing to return home.

(more)

+ Under-Secretary-General for peace-keeping reports on meetings in El Salvador on 14 March, stressing "positive and flexible attitude" of both Government and FMLN.

+ Expert body begins preparations in Geneva for 1994 World Conference on Natural Disaster Reduction.

* * *

Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali today welcomed "the positive results" of yesterday's referendum on democratic reform in South Africa.

In a statement at Headquarters, the Secretary-General said the results constituted a major step forward towards the eradication of apartheid and the creation of a new non-racial society in South Africa, based on the respect of human rights. Those prospects, he said, would constitute a new factor for peace and development throughout Africa.

* * *

The Secretary-General has condemned the bombing of the Israeli Embassy in Buenos Aires yesterday, in which a large number of innocent victims, including children, were killed or wounded.

Mr. Boutros-Ghali said through his Spokesman that "this outrage demonstrates once again the necessity to fight international terrorism vigorously".

* * *

The Security Council last night expressed unanimous support for the Secretary-General's decision urgently to dispatch a technical team to Somalia to seek agreement on a United Nations "monitoring mechanism" of the cease-fire, signed by the fighting parties on 3 March.

The Council took that action by adopting unanimously resolution 746 (1992) by which it also requested that the team develop a "high priority plan to establish mechanisms to ensure the unimpeded delivery of humanitarian assistance".

The Council also urged all the Somali factions to honour their commitment with the cease-fire and called on all the parties, movements and factions in Mogadiscio, in particular, and in Somalia in general, to respect fully the security and safety of the team and of the personnel of the humanitarian organizations.

By the resolution, the Council further expressed regret that the parties to the Somalia conflict had not abided by their commitment to the cease-fire and that they had not permitted the "unimpeded provision and distribution of humanitarian assistance" to the people in need in Somalia. It expressed deep concern for the "magnitude of the human suffering caused by the conflict" and

(more)

that "the continuation of the situation in Somalia constituted a threat to international peace and security".

The Council also expressed its appreciation to the regional organizations -- the Organization of African Unity (OAU), League of Arab States, and the Organization of the Islamic Conference -- for their cooperation with the United Nations in the effort to resolve the Somali problem.

In related news, the Spokesman said that, following yesterday's resolution, a technical team of 15 people was being set up with representatives of four areas: political, peace-keeping, humanitarian and regional organizations. He said that due to the urgency of the situation, the team was expected to regroup in Nairobi over the weekend to work on its plan for the mission.

* * *

The first contingents of the United Nations Transitional Authority (UNTAC) have arrived in Phnom Penh together with the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Cambodia, Yasushi Akashi, marking the beginning of the United Nations peace plan to end the 13-year conflict and to prepare for free elections.

At a ceremony outside the Royal Palace on Monday 16 March, the Indonesian, Australian, French and Thai contingents were welcomed by Prince Norodom Sihanouk and Mr. Akashi, head of UNTAC.

It was announced at a meeting of the Supreme National Council (SNC) -- the governing authority in Cambodia established under the Paris Agreement last October -- that a headquarters had been made available for UNTAC in Phnom Penh. Issues discussed during that meeting included, among other things, the mechanism set up under the Agreement, by which the Supreme National Council delegates to the United Nations all necessary powers to ensure the implementation of the plan. Also discussed were the timing and the modalities of the repatriation of the refugees; the regrouping and disposition of demobilized Cambodian forces; landmines; and the enforcement of law and order.

In a related development, it was announced today at Headquarters that Japan has deposited some $25 million -- its assessed contribution to UNTAC -- to assist the operation in meeting its start-up cost of $200 million.

In other news, the World Food Programme (WFP) has announced that it will provide emergency food aid worth of $330,000 to Cambodian refugees in Viet Nam. The Agency said the food aid would cover the needs of 12,650 refugees in the Lonbgbe Province for a 12-month period. The refugees fled Cambodia between 1976 and 1979 due to civil conflict and some 100,000 persons took refuge in south Viet Nam. Most of them have since returned home.

* * *

(more)

The General Assembly's Fifth Committee (Administrative and Budgetary) this morning approved without a vote a draft resolution which would have the Assembly appropriate $250 million for the expenses of the United Nations Protection Force in Yugoslavia (UNPROFOR).

The Assembly would appropriate that amount, inclusive of $10 million previously authorized in accordance with the recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Question (ACABQ). The Advisory Committee was of the view that the $250 million should be adequate until the Secretary-General submits additional requirement as may be necessary for the period beyond 1992.

The draft resolution would further have the Secretary-General report to the Assembly, by the start of its 47th session, on any additional requirement, and include detail and up-to-date information on the performance of UNPROFOR.

The General Assembly will meet tomorrow morning to act on the recommendation of the Fifth Committee.

* * *

The Secretary-General yesterday expressed his "great concern" over the widespread destruction and intense human sufferings caused by the earthquake that struck the Turkish City of Erzincan on Friday, 13 March.

In a message sent to the President of Turkey, Turgut Ozal, the Secretary-General extended the assistance of the United Nations for the relief operations in that country, in the form of relief specialists and air-lifting relief supplies. He informed the Turkish Government that he had requested the United Nations Emergency Relief Coordinator to continue his efforts to mobilize assistance, both financial and material, needed by the Turkish Government from external sources.

* * *

The World Health Organization (WHO) has reported that an extremely serious form of malaria, resistant to the usual drugs employed against the disease, is emerging in Cambodia, threatening more than 16,000 soldiers of the United Nations peace-keeping force now entering the country. Some 360,000 Cambodian refugees preparing to return to their homes in the next few weeks will also be at risk.

According to WHO experts, supplies of drugs in Cambodia are only a quarter of what is needed. Quinine plus tetracycline -- the main emergency treatment -- as well as other drugs, are all in short supply. Furthermore, resistance appears to be developing to most treatments, even to mefloquine.

The members of the peace-keeping force - United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) -- will be instructed to use insect repellants, wear long-sleeve clothes and sleep under bed-nets impregnated with insecticides. When in malaria's area for prolonged periods, the soldiers will

(more)

take regular doxycycline, an antibiotic, which has so far not been used in the area and for which no hard evidence of resistance has been found.

* * *

Describing the attitude during recent meetings in El Salvador as "positive and flexible", the head of United Nations peace-keeping operations says he is "confident" that the agreements reached with representatives of the Government of El Salvador and the Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberacion Nacional (FMLN) will be "implemented forthwith".

Under-Secretary-General Marrack Goulding was reporting on his recent mission in El Salvador, at the request of the Secretary-General, to discuss how best to set in motion the implementation of the Peace Agreement reached in New York on 31 December 1991 and solve certain problems which have occurred in that connection.

In a statement following the meetings, Mr. Goulding said he had obtained assurances from the FMLN that its concentration within its 15 zones would be completed according to the itinerary communicated to the United Nations Observer Force in El Salvador (ONUSAL), on the understanding that ONUSAL will promptly finalize arrangements with the Government for completing the concentration of its own forces at the earliest possible opportunity.

The Government has also provided assurances that the arrangements designed to facilitate logistic support in the 15 zones occupied by FMLN personnel, with ONUSAL as coordinator, will be set in motion.

On the question of land, Mr. Goulding said he had proposed various measures to diminish the tension between both sides and to create a climate of understanding between them with the good offices of ONUSAL. Among those, he said, was a proposal for the FMLN to do everything possible to prevent the taking of additional land and for the Government to prevent further instances of dispossession.

* * *

Preparations have begun in Geneva for the 1994 World Conference on Natural Disaster Reduction, endorsed by the General Assembly.

During its four-day session, the Scientific and Technical Committee -- a 24-member expert body charged with developing overall programmes for the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction (1990s) -- will assess progress in national and international programmes and projects designed to mitigate the effects of natural disasters, and discuss further plans for strengthening national capacities for disaster preparedness and reduction.

The Committee will also discuss, during its third session, input into regional meetings on disasters in Addis Ababa, in April, and in Jamaica, in

(more)

May, as well as the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio Janeiro, to be held in June, stressing the link between the environment and natural disasters.

The main target of International Decade is that, by the year 2000, all countries, as part of their plan to achieve sustainable development, should have in place a national assessment of risk, national and/or local prevention and preparedness plan, and global, regional, national and local warning system.

* *** *